



Name of Program: Alaska Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)/Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)

Name of Organization: Alaska State Division of Senior Services, Anchorage, AK

Choices for Independence Principle: Empowerment/Access to Information

Description of Program

The Alaska SMP/SHIP has the responsibility for creating awareness among seniors, caregivers and the general public of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. It also focuses on awareness of fraud, waste and abuse in those programs, including how to detect, prevent and report suspected fraudulent activities. Creating this public awareness is accomplished through the use volunteers. While using volunteers is standard practice in the aging network, accomplishing this in Alaska, especially in frontier, remote, minimally accessible areas, can be very challenging. In spite of these difficulties, this program under the direction of Essien Ukoidemabia has expanded the program to 30 areas with 79 volunteers. Most of this success has been accomplished successfully in the last three years. While the program operates in Alaska's "larger" cities, the fact that it has been able to reach out to small communities such as Bethel, Barrow (beyond the Arctic Circle), Glenallen and Minto is commendable.

Contributing to the successful statewide implementation of this program has been the organizational placement of the SHIP, a partner with the Administration on Aging, in the same organizations unit as the SMP program. This is in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Senior Services. This provides a coordinated approach by having trained volunteers funded by the two grants, assist seniors who have questions about Medicare and Medicaid or who may suspect fraud, waste and abuse in these programs.

Further, the SMP/SHIP was the primary vehicle for helping seniors to receive enrollment assistance with the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plans. This has been significant because Alaska, the nation's largest state, has so many remote towns and villages that are only accessible by air, making it difficult to develop a volunteer cadre. There are numerous examples throughout the state of how assistance provided by the SHIP/SMP volunteers helped a significant number of seniors save money on their prescription drugs.

Alaska's program demonstrates that even under the most difficult circumstances that a commitment to serving seniors can result in creative solutions. For more information

about the Alaska SMP/SHIP program contact Essien Ukoidemabia, Program Coordinator
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